The nondifferentiated foliage organ which bears ♂ and ♀ reproductive organs, and continues to act as an assimilating organ, being thus at the same time green and fertile, may be considered to represent one of the possible forms of the ancestral organs of grasses.

From the data presented the following conclusions may be drawn, which confirm the theories of Bower, MacDougal, and Dufrenoy:

Organs of grasses were at first all fertile but most of them became sterile under the pressure of ecologic factors. The vegetative activity overshadowed the reproductive activity and most organs become assimilating organs, viz., leaves. A few remained fertile, and responded in diverse ways to their reproductive specialization, attaining their greatest differentiation in ordinary maize.

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ORNITHOLOGY.—*Diagnosis of a new pycnonotine family of Passeriformes.* HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, Biological Survey.

It requires but a superficial examination to discover that the genus *Irena* is out of place among the Pycnonotidae. Apparently it has been referred to that family because of its conspicuous nuchal hairs, which are so characteristic a feature of the bulbuls; and because of the lack of a better place.

That this disposition has not been considered satisfactory is evidenced by Dr. R. B. Sharpe's reference of *Irena* to the Dicruridae,[1] which action was, however, soon, and properly, repudiated by Dr. Sharpe himself.[2] As a matter of fact, the fairy bluebirds, as the members of the genus *Irena* are called, with their metallic

[1] Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., **3**: 265. 1877.

[2] Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., **6**: 174. 1881.

plumage and heavily plumed nostrils, do, at first glance, very much resemble the drongos (family Dicruridae); but the possession of twelve instead of ten rectrices definitely excludes them from that group. Since, as above indicated, the birds now comprised in the genus *Irena* Horsfield are not properly referable to the Pycnonotidae or to any other recognized family, it becomes necessary to create for them a new group, to be called

Irenidae, fam. nov.

Diagnosis.—Readily differentiated from the Pycnonotidae by the strongly corvine bill and the densely and entirely feathered nostrils and nasal fossae.

Family characters.—Bill thick and heavy, but somewhat compressed, the culmen rather sharply ridged, the gonys rounded; terminal portion of maxillar tomia notched; mental apex opposite anterior end of nasal fossae; nostrils small and subrounded, situated in the anterior end of nasal fossae, and entirely and thickly covered with closely appressed antrorse feathers and bristles; head completely feathered; nuchal hairs present and of moderate length; tail of twelve stiffish feathers, slightly rounded, and making up nearly half the total length of bird; wings rather long and rounded; tertials short; first (outermost) primary spurious, but more than one-half the length of second; feet rather small, the claws moderately developed; tarsi short, scutellate, but sometimes rather indistinctly so.

Type genus.—*Irena* Horsfield.

Remarks.—The birds of this new family comprise eight current species, two of which are, however, but subspecies, and an additional new subspecies, hereinafter described. Authors have hitherto included all these in the single genus *Irena*, but structural differences necessitate the division of this into two genera, as follows:

Irena Horsfield

Irena Horsfield, Trans. Linn. Soc. Lond., ser. 1, XIII, pt. 1, May, 1821, p. 153 (type by monotypy, *Coracias puella* Latham).